

Francis & Taylor
1895

ERNEST HOWARD CROSBY

A Valuation and a Tribute

LEONARD D. ABBOTT

W. A. Collier Jr.

W. A. Collier Jr.

ERNEST HOWARD CROSBY

A VALUATION AND A TRIBUTE

**BY
LEONARD D. ABBOTT**

**1907
THE ARIEL PRESS
WESTWOOD MASSACHUSETTS**

To W. A.

ERNEST HOWARD CROSBY! Of a genial, deep-acred farm, with a stone house and barn built for the centuries — river-marged, and full of herds — a mountain, too, granitic, yet verdured — oaks and pines — and a welcome — the welcome of the open hearth in winter, and the wide porch in summer. Something like this helps to image this splendid brother of all lives. Ruggedness and gentleness mingled, as the cloud and the sunshine in the perfect day. To the gentleness a child would smile, and the strength it would trust divinely. He might have been a Viking come back, something of the infinite of sea and mountains in him — the great daring voyage — and the vines purpling in the autumn, and fellowing home and children — and peace — the home peace in which is an enchantment that only he who has beaten the far seas with his weary but brave oars knows in a fulness, as of the ripened year.

He might have been Ulysses come back — if indeed he is not a greater than the Argonauts — divided between home and Penelope, and the splendid genuineness of the sea with the far glint of the golden fleece inviting. Peace held him in thrall. Genuineness was his brother-twin. The ideal was his sky.

JOHN MILTON SCOTT.

FROM purple and pomp you elected
To walk in the gray common road.
To keep your free soul high-erected
You joined the despised, the rejected,
To lift at the terrible load.

We saw you, with strong face unfearing
Make way through the noise of the horde—
Right on through the jibe and the jeering;
And ever to laughter and fleeing,
Your song was your answering sword.

—From Edwin Markham's
Poem on Ernest Crosby



E. A. Crosby

ERNEST HOWARD CROSBY

IN an unforgettable lecture on "Hamlet and Don Quixote," the great novelist, Turgenieff, has spoken of the dual strain of introspection and idealism that shapes the characters of men. The analogy is based on profound intuition, and suggests itself as a perpetual touchstone in dealing with human traits. But there are some natures that fall outside of its limits. When I think of Ernest Crosby, I think of one who merged the Hamlet and Don Quixote strains with a third essential and spiritual element. He was Sir Galahad, as well as Don Quixote, and his quest was the quest of the Holy Grail.

Something of the spirit of both those knights was in him that afternoon, years ago, when I found him in a little tavern on the East Side of New York, in consultation with a group of Anarchists. He was discussing ways and means of releasing from jail a young revolutionist who had been imprisoned for an act of violence. The youth had tried to shoot an employer of labor, in a blaze of passion inspired by a sense of sacred vengeance; and now, after years of confinement, his friends were trying to secure a reprieve. Crosby, though he disapproved of all violence, was willing to intercede for him. Nothing came of his intercession, but the incident is worth

recording here, because it is typical and throws a flood of light on Crosby's character. A touch of chivalry, a touch of fantasy, went into all that he did.

When I saw him later in his palatial residence at Rhinebeck-on-the-Hudson, it seemed to me that nothing else in all his life and character could be quite so important as the train of motives that led him from his country gentleman's home into that East Side saloon. And I still feel that whatever is significant in him is summed up in just that train of motives.

Some glimpses of the spiritual and intellectual development through which he passed on his way from stolid conservatism to extreme radicalism may be had from his own writings. He has testified that in mid-life he experienced a kind of "re-birth," and that it took place suddenly, as the result of much inner travail and conflict. During the period when this great change fell upon him he was a Judge of the International Court in Alexandria, Egypt. His position as a man of distinction and authority among a primitive native population was hardly such as to conduce to radicalism of any kind. But behind his judge's robes was a pure heart and an honest soul. The time came, as it was bound to come, when he lost interest in "judging" men. He longed to *love* them instead.

It was a little book of Tolstoy's, on "Life," that kindled in his heart a flame that no later influence was ever able to quench. One Sunday he read the book to its conclusion with a sense of overpowering uplift. And then he tried to realise its implications. As he tells us:

The book said, "Love others; love them calmly, strongly, profoundly.

And you will find your immortal soul."

I leaned back in my armchair, letting my hand fall with the volume in my lap,

And with closed eyes and half a smile on my face I made the experiment and tried to love.

For the first time I really let my life go forth in love, and lo, the mighty current welling up, beneath and around me, lifted me, as it were bodily, out of time and space.

I felt the eternal poise of my indestructible soul in the regions of life everlasting.

Immortality was mine. The question which had so long baffled the creeds and the philosophers was answered.

In this mood Crosby gave up his position in Alexandria and visited Tolstoy in Russia. There must have been something intensely beautiful in the ardor and sincerity of this splendidly endowed personality who came to Yasnaya Poliana to lay all at the master's feet, and to dedicate his life to ideals that had burst upon him with the full force of a revelation.

Tolstoy was not dead to the romance of the incident. His heart went out to the young American, and a friendship began that lasted through Crosby's life—and beyond.

Crosby, on his side, returned to America with new visions thronging upon him. They were no longer visions of worldly eminence or material power. On ambitions of that kind he had turned his back for ever. He was concerned with entirely new values. He was earnestly seeking, now, a certain truth and beauty that had hitherto eluded him. With the simple sincerity and naivete of a child, he began to test life, and all its motives and actions, anew, taking nothing for granted and submitting everything to the test of his newly awakened conscience. He wanted to discover a philosophy by which he might live and teach others to live. This man who had been something of a world-spirit; who had looked upon the Sphinx and felt a magic in the Egyptian desert; who had yielded to the lure of Venice and of Rome; who had mingled in the crowds of London and Paris and St. Petersburg, came home to a simple village on the Hudson, to live out quiet years, seemingly immersed in the details of his farm-estate, but forever haunted by a larger dream.

Many of the conclusions at which he arrived he worked out by himself. His impulse was quickened

by personal contact with the leaders of radical thought, and by reading great books. He was always something of a hero-worshipper. To Tolstoy he felt that he owed the supreme debt. But Walt Whitman and Henry George influenced him almost as deeply, and he came to accept the latter's "Single Tax" theories implicitly. With a certain inevitability he turned to a kind of rough prose-poetry for the expression of his new emotions. He wrote a biography of William Lloyd Garrison, the non-resistant Abolitionist, and an appreciative study of Edward Carpenter, the English Socialist. His sympathies embraced Emerson and Kropotkin, Mayor Jones, of Toledo, and Saint Francis of Assisi. From all of these men he took what he needed; but the life-philosophy he constructed was distinctly his own.

He would have summed it up, I am sure, as a philosophy of Love. "I want my life to be one long love-story," he said. Again and again he affirmed his conviction that the only attitude toward life that can bring enduring satisfaction is an attitude of love. It is a gospel as old and beautiful as that of the white Christ, but the mere generalizations of love can hardly satisfy us. If Crosby had done nothing more than utter generalizations, he could not hold us. Any one can love, or can say that he loves—in the abstract. What interests us are the practical applications of love.

In a survey of Crosby's literary achievement, Henry S. Salt, of London, has said that not only was Crosby capable of writing great poetry, but that he wrote some verses that no other man could have written. To this I would add the statement that not only was Crosby a great lover of humanity, but that his life of service, and the philosophy which inspired it, represent a kind of love that is just a little different from that of any other man who has ever lived. He was a great social reconciler because, like the "new envoys" of his own poem, he helped to bridge the chasm between rich and poor, throwing his own body into the gulf. He was a great intellectual figure because two of the most vital spiritual tendencies of our age met within him. Those tendencies are Puritanism and Anarchism, the spirit of religion and restraint, and the spirit of freedom. He did not succeed in harmonizing the two currents. In certain matters his soul remained, to the end, an arena of warring forces. But he incarnated, he symbolized, the whole struggle.

The deep religiousness of his nature distinguishes him as essentially Puritan. There was always something of the mystic in him, and those lines of reverie that he wrote just before his death communicate his sense of the unreality of all earthly things:

For we are vague and unsubstantial shadows
Cast for a moment by our larger selves

Upon this whirling globe, itself mere semblance,
Which some adventurous, wandering ray of truth
Paints with a wayward stroke on heaven's wall.
In vain we sleep and waken, thinking thus
To escape the land of shadows. If by night
We singly dream, by day we dream together—
And all is dream—save when a sudden flood
Of calm conviction, surging from beneath,
Uprises through the fountain of our being,
And overflows the temporal world of sense—
A flood that in receding leaves behind
Imperishable hints of broader life,
Transcendent truth and supernatural substance
Beyond the pale of dreams. Our universe
Treads in the skirts of unimagined grandeur.

So, as a barnacled and battered keel,
Long buffeted by lapse of rushing waters,
Dank seaweed and the world of scale and fin,
Might, in the throb and tremor of its frame,
Feel a faint whispering of slant towering masts
(Friends to the sun), of zephyr-haunted sails,
And spacious bulwarks in an element
Undreamed-of, incommensurate—so may we
Thrill at the touch of our supernal selves
Which loom up dim in regions adequate
Beneath an unknown sky.

But, apart from this mystic sense, his attitude toward life was always that of a religious man. His poetry is full of religious symbolism, and he took a

distinctly religious view of his own mission and message to the world:

I draw, but my pencil is driven
By a Force that is master of me.

Even in his most radical odes the religious spirit appears, sometimes, I feel, incongruously, conveying a curious combination of revolutionism and pietism.

Crosby created a God in his own image, as all good men do. The first attribute of his God was Love, the second Freedom, just as half of his own nature was Puritan and the other half Anarchist. One of his chief reasons for reverencing God was an Anarchistic reason. "There is nothing free but God." And just because his God was a free God, he had no wish to impose Him on others. God, he intimated, is "an experience of the soul"; and every man is entitled to his own experience.

While Crosby's Puritanism kept him religious, his freedom of spirit led him on from heresy to heresy. His creed was too broad for any existing religious body, and he confessed that he often had to get outside of the churches to find any genuine religion at all. "I find more real religion," he once said, "at a base-ball match than in a Fifth Avenue church." He maintained friendly relations with his home church at Rhinebeck until the end of his life, but he grew more and more dissatisfied with organized religion of any kind. "Why is it," he asked, with

a touch of sadness, "that the beautiful church bells mean less every year?" The answer to that question may be found in his four lines on "Religion":

The childish mistaking of pictures for facts,—

The crass materialization of allegory,—

The infinite capacity of man for humbugging himself,—

And underneath it all the shadowy outline of truth.

Crosby's preoccupation with moral questions, no less than his religious spirit, evidence the Puritan stamp of mind. He regarded conduct with all the seriousness of a serious nature, and he was preternaturally sensitive to moral claims. And yet the role of the self-conscious moralist was utterly distasteful to him. To be constantly listening for the voice of conscience, he thought, betokens "disorder and disease." He insisted that the *habit* of rectitude represents something much higher than the power to discern and conquer so-called "temptation." He longed for that era "beyond good and evil" which Nietzsche visioned.

When Crosby cast off his judge's robes at Alexandria, he abandoned, once and for all, the role of the censor. He recognized the immense difficulty and subtlety of the whole moral issue, and he viewed crime and evil from a standpoint that has yet to be accepted by the vast majority of mankind. He held that there is no absolute right and wrong, that no

individual is wholly good or wholly bad. All of us have something of good and something of evil within us. Each of us, or any of us, according to Crosby's reading of life, might have been criminals under the pressure of circumstance. And so the criminal is our brother. Nay more, he is our very self.

I judge you?

Who made me to be a judge over you?

What do I know about you?

What do I know about myself?

I sometimes think that I condemn myself on inadequate evidence.

Is not the fact of being born a man or a woman an all-sufficient extenuating circumstance?

Do not think that I am judging you; I am judging myself.

I know you only as a reflection of myself.

All your worst faults are flourishing in my soul, and it is only there that I can know them and grapple with them.

I am merely using you as a lay-figure to represent myself.

I cannot effectually invade your country.

I can only invite you to inaugurate a campaign there on your own account.

My punishment is what I am.

Chains, prisons, solitary cells, are but faint shadows of it.

And I am also my own reward;
For a strain of heaven too has somehow worked
itself into my substance.
I am the product of my own good and evil.
Why should I judge and punish you, when we must
all judge and punish ourselves?

Crosby went further, and argued, with Edward Carpenter that the criminal has his necessary place in the onward urge of the world. Crime, like disease, is a warning that natural laws have been transgressed. The thief may be a living protest against unjust property statutes, the smuggler a rude argument for free trade.

Are we, then, to abolish prisons? Under existing conditions that is impossible. But we may take an attitude which Crosby himself indicated: "I do not believe in exercising coercion on my fellow-men, and hence I cannot undertake to execute or imprison them directly or indirectly. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone. I refuse to act as a judge. And as people come gradually round to my opinion, there will be fewer and fewer left who will be willing to act as hangmen and jailers and warders, until finally such professions will disappear."

Crosby had indomitable faith in the moral future of mankind. He held that the moral instinct is indestructible, and that a time will come when men and women will do good as naturally and as

freely as birds and beasts go about their business. In the meanwhile we are likely to know the tragedy of conflicting standards. On the one hand we shall have the more or less unconscious expression of subversive ideals; on the other, a conscious idealism born out of its due time and insistently seeking expression. Crosby admitted his own inability to live out his full ideal. The Anarchist in him was free, but the Puritan held him back. He could only bemoan the "scruples" that deaden vital action. As in the case of Master Heinrich, the hero of Hauptmann's inspired play, the "sunken bell" of past tradition boomed in his ears.

The conflict in Crosby's temperament is nowhere more clearly marked than in his attitude toward sex. No question is more important than this; there is a sense in which it involves and includes all others. For two thousand years there has been war between the two world-attitudes toward sex—the ascetic attitude of the Christian and the passionate attitude of the Greek. Shall we mortify the flesh, or shall we exalt it? Shall we limit the expressions of love, or shall we extend them?

What had Crosby to say here?

The disappointing answer must be that before the riddle of sex he hesitated, without being able to give any definite answer. Again he was half Puritan, half Anarchist. His restraint and reticence in dealing with the subject were thoroughly Puritan.

This poet who gloried in abandoning himself to a quixotic idealism, who felt to the heart of him the lyric ecstasy, the "divine madness," of cosmic love, and spoke of letting that world-love pass and re-pass through him as "the ocean passes through the gills of a fish," shrank from any treatment of sex-love. Hamlin Garland has pointed out that, most significantly, there is not a single reference to romantic love in all Crosby's poetry.

Crosby acknowledged frankly that he was baffled. "For the present," he said, "I see no solution of these troublesome problems of sex, and do not know in which direction to search for one." But he felt the supreme importance of the subject, and returned to it again and again.

The two modern books on the sex-question which impressed him most deeply were Tolstoy's "Kreutzer Sonata" and Carpenter's "Love's Coming of Age." At first he was inclined to agree with Tolstoy in thinking that absolute chastity is the highest ideal—if we can attain it. But later he found himself strongly drawn to Carpenter's "free" and more pagan attitude. In other words, his maturer sympathies were with the liberty of the Anarchists, rather than with the asceticism of the Christians. Crosby once remarked that he found the discussion of sex "disagreeable," and that most of the people absorbed by it were "anti-pathetic" to him. But

his own actions belie the statement. He entered into voluminous correspondence, touching on many aspects of the sex-question, with his friend J. William Lloyd, of Westfield, New Jersey, and the latter's radical views undoubtedly had a certain fascination for him.

Toward the end of his life Crosby made the extreme statement, "Sexual love is the origin not only of the human race, but of all our altruism, all our idealism, all our art, all our religion;" and added: "Falling in love, in its larger implications, is the one thing in life worth doing." The whole logic of Crosby's argument tended toward a new emphasis on the higher aspects of sex-love, a new valuation of its life-giving power; but he never formulated that attitude definitely. There was too much of the Puritan in him.

It is in the abandon of his world-passion that we must look for the true Crosby and the greatest Crosby. Here, if anywhere, he cast off what is narrowing in Puritanism, and became the whole-hearted apostle of freedom.

"Liberty, sad, dethroned queen," he cried, "though all the world turn against you, *I* will be true to you!" and he meant that, meant it to the end, meant it even to the writing of those fierce lines against his own country, at the beginning of the Philippine War:

I hate the oppressor's iron rod,
I hate his murderous ships;
But most of all I hate, O God,
The lie upon his lips!

Nay, if they still demand recruits
To curse Manila bay,
Be men; refuse to act like brutes,
And massacre and slay!

Or, if you will persist to fight,
With all a soldier's pride,
Why, then, be rebels for the right
By Aguinaldo's side!

There was always something fanatical in Crosby's devotion to liberty. It led him, in considering the Civil War, to take the position that the Southern States ought to have been allowed to secede, if they wanted to. It led him, in questions much nearer our own time, to conclusions that most men in his position would have regarded as decidedly inconvenient, to say the least. On a memorable occasion he appeared on the platform of the Cooper Union, defending the right of the English Anarchist, John Turner, to land in this country at a time when the anti-Anarchist law, passed as a result of President McKinley's assassination, compelled Turner's deportation. He also took part, by letter, in a public reception tendered to Moses Harman in Chicago, when that veteran and high-minded advocate of sex-

freedom was released from a forth term of imprisonment.

Crosby's faith in freedom gives us the key to practically everything in his social creed. He believed in free land and the Single Tax; he advocated free trade and free banking and free immigration; he thought that voluntary cooperation would solve most of our industrial problems. He carried his hostility to coercion in its every form so far that he contended we have no right to coerce even children; and he was deeply interested in an experimental school which admitted only the principles of love and persuasion, and excluded all force and punishment, in the training of the young. He disapproved so strongly of the rule of man by man that for many years he refused to vote, on the ground that voting involves majority rule. He held before him as the true social ideal a federation of free groups, composed of free individuals freely cooperating. There would be spontaneous adjustment and harmony, but no authority. To develop the spiritual power that would make men independent of government was Crosby's deepest purpose.

I am homesick.

Homesick for the home I have never seen,
For the land where I shall look horizontally into the
eyes of my fellows.

The land where men rise only to lift.

The land where equality leaves men to differ as they will.
The land where freedom is breathed in the air and courses in the blood.
Where there is nothing over a man between him and the sky.
Where the obligations of love are sought for as prizes,
And where they vary as the moon.
That land is my true country.
I am here by some sad cosmic mistake,
And I am homesick.

Now all this is sheer Anarchism. That is to say, it is a philosophy of life based fundamentally on the idea that *freedom* is the working principle of all good society. Crosby has been loosely and inaccurately called a Socialist. But in reality he was antagonistic to much of the Socialist doctrine, and criticized it from the Anarchistic point of view. "I see in Socialism," he said, "an enormous centralization of power in the hands of fallible men who will have the opportunity to tyrannize to an extent unknown in history."

Crosby's attitude toward Socialism was so characteristic, and, in general, the attitude of thinking men toward Socialism is so clearly indicative of their intellectual temper, that his views in this connection are well worth studying. With certain phases of Socialism Crosby was in practical agreement. He

wrote for Socialist papers, and numbered many Socialists among his friends. The Socialist spirit of protest, and the ultimate ideal of such free Socialists as Morris and Gorky, Debs and Herron, he shared. But he had all the Puritan's distrust of the radical type, and all the Anarchist's jealousy for liberty.

In times of revolution, he was wont to say, the worst men come to the front, instead of the best; and good men become perverted. Robespierre, for instance, was by nature a man opposed to cruelty, but he gradually gave his consent to the Terror in order that he might maintain his power. Let us imagine, wrote Crosby, that the Socialists and the radical element were to gain control of the government in America today, what would be the result? In replying to that question he drew the following picture:

In the case of some great industrial crisis within the next few years, when practically all workmen are idle, let us suppose that they begin to riot in many places at once, and call for the bread which they cannot earn. The ordinary machinery of commerce and government has broken down. In the midst of disorder a national convention is called and delegates flock to Washington, with the mutterings and threats of discontent and starvation in their ears. They would no longer be the futile politicians of ordinary elections—the absurd and ridiculous mannikins who now strut through the forms of legislation;

but real representatives of the people, newly stirred to a consciousness of their needs. I fancy I could name a score of delegates—men and women of the highest ideals and capacity. Such a representative body would be certain to compare favorably, from the point of view of ability, with the French Assembly, and it would come together with the same lofty aims and the same devotion to them. Would it end in the same carnival of horror? With the example of the peace-loving Robespierre before us it is impossible to scout the idea. The only safeguard against such a danger is the utter repudiation of all violent methods of reform. Once permit yourself to rely upon rifles and prisons, and the descent is easy to all kinds of cruelty and torture. The lesson of all history is that men are not to be trusted with the power of life and death over their fellows; and any revolution which claims for itself any such power carries in its bosom the seeds of a counter movement which will bring in again the supremacy of the party of reaction.

Crosby objected to the "cocksure dogmatism" of many Socialists, whom he compared to the Calvinists with their iron-clad dogmas of predestination. The Socialist interpretation of the trust excited his special criticism. It is assumed by Socialist thinkers that the evolution of society is toward larger and larger industrial aggregations, which in due time are to become public property. How can we be sure, asked Crosby, that society will thus develop? Why should

the massing of economic power in the hands of a diminishing number of men lead to Social Democracy? In Crosby's judgment, the trust movement was in danger of producing results exactly the opposite of those predicted and desired by Socialists. So far from paving the way for a cooperative society, it might simply lead to an industrial oligarchy.

Another of the Socialist theories with which he took issue was the so-called "materialistic conception of history," resting on the idea that economic conditions are the all-important factors in human development. Crosby contended that progress is due to an inner law of growth even more than to economic necessity. He felt that the Socialist argument was too one-sided, and he hotly affirmed that it did not fit his own case:

I am not wax,—I am energy.

Like the whirlwind and waterspout I twist my environment into my form, whether it will or not.

What is it that transmutes electricity into auroras, and sunlight into rainbows, and soft flakes of snow into stars, and adamant into crystals, and makes solar systems of *nebulæ*?

Whatever it is, I am its cousin german.

I too have my ideals to work out, and the universe is given me for raw material.

I am a signet and I will put my stamp upon the molten stuff before it hardens.

What allegiance do I owe to environment? I shed environments for others as a snake sheds its skin. The world must come my way—slowly, if it will—but still my way.
I am a vortex launched in chaos to suck it into shape.

Crosby's criticism of the Socialist position is invalidated by the fact that there was so much of the Utopian, so little of the scientist, in his temperament. Yet every individual thinker has his own special vision of truth, and the world is richer for it. Socialism has nothing to fear and much to learn from Crosby and thinkers like him. He was not tilting at windmills when he uttered these particular criticisms. There *is* an absolutist temper in the Socialist movement that menaces the freedom of the individual and that needs to be offset by an equally strong libertarian spirit. Moreover, the Socialist sympathiser in America today is bound to recognize that long years and well-nigh insuperable difficulties lie between the trust regime and any effectual public ownership of our great industrial properties. One of the clearest-headed of American Socialist thinkers, W. J. Ghent, has registered, in a pessimistic mood, his fear that on the way to the cooperative commonwealth we may fall under the thralldom of a "benevolent feudalism;" and H. G. Wells, in his book on the "Future in America," portrays most vividly the chasm that stretches between our present era, with

its private control of the trusts, and that period of transformation in which our slipshod, time-serving Congress is to become an efficient instrument of industrial administration.

It is significant, too, that Socialist writers are conceding that the theory of the economic interpretation of history has been over-emphasized. John Spargo, in his lucid exposition of "Socialism," offers the following suggestive comment on the whole subject:

The doctrine of the materialistic conception of history does not imply economic fatalism. It does not deny that ideals influence historical developments and individual conduct. It does not deny that men may, and often do, act in accordance with the promptings of noble impulses, when their material interests would lead them to act otherwise. We have a conspicuous example of this in Marx's own life, his splendid devotion to the cause of the workers through years of terrible poverty and hardship when he might have chosen wealth and fame. Thus we are to understand the materialistic theory as teaching, not that history is determined by economic forces only, but that in human evolution the chief factors are social factors, and that these factors in turn are *mainly* molded by economic circumstances.

Crosby's position, then, was somewhat impatiently critical of Socialism, and decidedly friendly to Anarchism. But it cannot be too strongly emphasized

that his peculiar kind of Anarchism was the Anarchism, not of violence, but of loving kindness. It was based on non-resistance, and he cherished this ideal second only to his ideal of freedom.

There are bound to be many opinions as to how far the world, at the present juncture, needs non-resistance, and how far it needs the spirit of violent revolt. It probably needs both. In Russia today the need is for rebellion, not for a continuance of Slav docility. Tolstoy is wrong, and Gorky is right. But in the more advanced countries, the doctrine of non-resistance, as promulgated by such men as Tolstoy and Ernest Crosby, serves as a spiritual leaven and humanizing influence.

To be a non-resistant, in Crosby's sense, means to abandon physical force in favor of a higher spiritual power. The man who is non-resistant takes his place with those who have risen above hatred and revenge, and who refuse to have recourse to the merely physical. Christ is the greatest non-resistant that ever lived. He is credited with only one act of violence—the driving of the money-changers out of the temple. The Quakers conquered when armed force failed; and the records of history show that the thinker "with folded arms" is more potent, in the long stretch of the centuries, than the myriad minions of kings and emperors. But the highest type of non-resistant is always a strong man, never a

.

weak one. "Let us beware," said Crosby, "of imitations and travesties of non-resistance. It is no colorless, negative quality, and should have no taint of timidity, no suspicion of effeminacy. Let us be quite sure that we are above violence, and not beneath it. It is far better," he continued, "to fight to the death than to decline the combat from cowardice, whatever may be the name behind which we mask it." Again he wrote:

Franklin was mistaken when he said that there had never been a good war or a bad peace. Every peace based upon fear is bad, and many a war has been better than peace would have been, merely because the combatants knew no better. The true peace is that of the man or nation that has the giant's strength but scorns to use it as a giant,—that is wise enough to see that the Lord is not in the wind nor the earthquake nor the fire, but in the still, small voice.

So gentle a spirit was Crosby that, like Buddha, he would permit no animal to be slain for him. "There can be but one justification," he said, "for the all-round horror of butchery, and that is its necessity. . . . But flesh, so far from being a necessary food, is a poor food, and is not a clean food." He spoke out of his own experience, for he was a strict vegetarian during the best years of his life.

It goes without saying that Crosby was anti-

militarist. Armies represent force and coercion. We are bound to outgrow them. "Why cannot a nation," he inquired naively, "behave like a gentleman?" and in the question is summed up the whole war-problem. "Good God!" he added. "Is it too much to hope that the day may come when every sane man will shrink from running a bayonet into a fellow-creature as he would now shrink from torturing a baby?"

Crosby felt that armies are not only inhuman, but ridiculous. "Oh, for some satirist," he cried, "to show us the follies and absurdities of militarism!" In the absence of one better qualified for the task than himself, he wrote "Captain Jinks," a burlesque on the Philippine War. His venture into the domain of humor was not a conspicuous success, but the spirit of the book is unimpeachable.

In his youthful days Crosby had himself succumbed for awhile to the fascinations of the military career. He served eight years in the National Guard of New York and attained the rank of major. He has gleefully narrated how he used to "wear a cocked hat with an ostrich feather a yard long," and to "prance up and down Fifth Avenue on a riding school nag, feeling like a composite photograph of Washington and Napoleon." But he came to the conclusion that there was "nothing but vanity at the bottom of the whole business." The blare of

trumpets and the panoply of war became for him a snare and a delusion, entangling the youth of the land by their false glamor. In an earnest poem he has transcribed his fluctuating emotions as he watched a regiment on parade:

The regiment is passing down the street to embark
for the war.

The band is playing a stirring, swelling march.

The colonel rides alone, with the easy excellence and
mastery of a perfect horseman on a perfect
horse.

The rank and file march proudly by with their eyes
fixed before them.

There is conscious courage and self-sacrifice in their
look.

Their bayonets are glancing in the sun.

The crowd on each side is carried away with enthu-
siasm, hurrahing, waving handkerchiefs and
hats, and some even shedding tears.

It is indeed a thrilling sight.

I stand at a window disapproving, and yet the ex-
citement beats up against me and overwhelms
me.

It is fine; it is grand; it is splendid!

I wave my handkerchief with the rest, and my eyes
too become moist.

And yet I know what these men are advancing to.
They will slaughter other men as courageous and
self-sacrificing as themselves, and against whom
they have no grievance.

They will grasp others as lovable by the throat in a death struggle, and one life or the other will go out in hate.

They will fill a distant land with moanings and groanings and torments, widows and orphans.

They will do all this and more, and yet I am forced unwillingly to feel that there is something magnificent in their spirit and carriage.

What baleful influence has thus mingled the good with the evil?

How come God and the devil to be thus inextricably intertwined?

Ah, it is the riddle of the age, to separate these contrary principles of life and death,

To stamp out all that is cruel and diabolical, without treading on the smallest atom of divine manliness and devotion.

Must we wait long for a heaven-born solution?

God forbid! but meanwhile I stand at my window, waving my handkerchief with shame and hesitation.

Perhaps the best single word that describes Ernest Crosby is "humanist." "Of all men whom I have known," says J. William Lloyd, "Crosby best personified humanism. His great heart was the one thing that everybody felt and nobody forgot." In very truth, Crosby loved the human in all its aspects, and cared more for human health and harmony than for anything else. He cannot be classified with any

one school of thinkers. His sympathy was with *all* the radical movements, and he dedicated a volume of poems to "the noble army of traitors and heretics," which includes rebels of every sort the wide world over. Crosby represented that finest of human types—the aristocrat become democrat. He was a man of patrician lineage who chose to devote himself to the service of the lowly. "Now I understand," he wrote—

I take my place in the lower classes.

I renounce the title of gentleman because it has become intolerable to me.

Dear Master, I understand now why you too took
your place in the lower classes,
And why you refused to be a gentleman.

It is as an idealist, rather than as a literary figure, that Crosby will live. His poems, his biographical studies, his fugitive articles, are but different aspects of a mind chiefly remarkable for its insight, its purity, its radicalism. To say this is not to deny that he possessed literary gifts of a high order. In his poem, "Moods," says Hamlin Garland, "Crosby comes near to Henley and to Whitman in a certain originality of design and an almost equal firmness of execution;" and no one can deny the universal touch in the oft-quoted lines entitled "Life and Death":

So he died for his faith. That is fine—
More than most of us do.
But stay, can you add to that line
That he lived for it, too?

In his death he bore witness at last
As a martyr to truth.
Did his life do the same in the past
From the days of his youth?

It is easy to die. Men have died
For a wish or a whim—
From bravado or passion or pride.
Was it harder for him?

But to live: every day to live out
All the truth that he dreamt,
While his friends met his conduct with doubt
And the world with contempt—

Was it thus that he plodded ahead,
Never turning aside?
Then we'll talk of the life that he led—
Never mind how he died.

There is another universal note in his lilt of the
beautiful boy from Love's Country:

I saw a lad, a beautiful lad,
With a far-off look in his eye,
Who smiled not on the battle-flag
When the cavalry troop marched by

And sorely vexed, I asked the lad
Where might his country be
Who cared not for our country's flag
And the brave from oversea?

"Oh, my country is the Land of Love,"
Thus did the lad reply;
"My country is the Land of Love,
And a patriot there am I."

"And who is your king, my patriot boy,
Whom loyally you obey?"
"My king is Freedom," quoth the lad,
"And he never says me nay."

"Then you do as you like in your Land of Love,
Where every man is free?"
"Nay, we do as we love," replied the lad,
And his smile fell full on me.

In the main Crosby's verse makes its appeal as *thought*—great thought, great idealism, expressed always vividly and arrestingly, sometimes very subtly and exquisitely—but thought, rather than poetry. They are chants, these poems, "plain talk," as he phrased it himself. He cared more for the content of his poetry than for its form. It was life, rather than literature, that interested him. "Words," he said, "are but the footnotes of life;" and there is a sense in which he was greater than anything he ever wrote.

Crosby's home life at Rhinebeck, with his wife and her mother, and his boy and girl, had many elements of beauty. His environment there was spacious, like his own nature. The house in which he lived lies close to stately trees. The entrance porch commands a view across the Hudson River to the Catskill mountains; and from a piazza at the back one can look out over an Italian garden, ablaze with color, to the broad acres of the estate, stretching as far as the eye can reach. Once when he was driving me over the estate he said: "All this ought not to be private property, But what can one do? Would it accomplish any real, any enduring, good to distribute it among the people here?" I was reminded of the quandary of the young Russian noble in Tolstoy's "Resurrection," and of the difficulties he encounters in his efforts to divide his lands among his peasant-tenants.

Activity was the very law of Crosby's being. But he was inspired by no hope of sudden or dramatic social change. "I do not look for anything special to happen," he would say, "we must simply keep on working." In spite of all his interests, he was essentially a lonely figure, and there was even a certain tragedy in his loneliness. A lesser man would have sought disciples. He evidently felt, with Ibsen, that "he is strongest who stands alone." He had acquaintances and neighbors among the great and

powerful of the earth, but he let his affections play where they listed.

He was nothing if not a pioneer, and he knew the bitterness, as well as the ecstasy, of the pioneer's experience. A Puritan he remained, in one sense, to the end, with a certain exclusiveness and fastidiousness. He was never able to assimilate fully with the radical elements. He lectured all over the country, sometimes to large audiences, sometimes to mere handfuls of people. He attended conferences; organized clubs; served on the committees of anti-imperialist leagues; and helped to finance cooperative societies. He was a leader of forlorn hopes. Upon him fell all the burdens and difficulties of pioneer work—the tag-ends of abortive schemes that spring up overnight in the wake of the radical movement. Always lovingly he helped the new idea to be born.

A complete collection of his poems and articles would necessitate a search through the files of a score of idealistic journals, many of which have now suspended publication. For several years he edited his own journal, *The Whim*, with his friend, Benedict Prieth. He also wrote for *The Arena* and *The Comrade*, for Michael Monahan's *Papyrus*, Traubel's *Conservator*, George Elmer Littlefield's *Ariel*, C. P. Somerby's *Commonwealth* and Louis F. Post's Single Tax weekly, *The Public*. His articles were written not for money, but for love.

Not only did Crosby give, asking for nothing in return, but he almost seemed to feel that his service might be impaired in some degree if it was recognized, or if any attempt was made to compensate him for it. He lived for truth as other men live for money and for power. He felt as a passion what others hardly feel at all. There have been some who criticized the apparent discrepancy between his life and his teaching. But he gave *himself*, without price,—the high-water mark of his thought, all that was greatest in him. A man can do no more than that.

Crosby was a natural born leader. With his magnificent presence, his great abilities, he could have won the highest political honors. Before he was a Judge, he was associated with Theodore Roosevelt as a member of the New York State Legislature, and he might have been a Mayor or a Governor. Instead, he chose to become an apostle of unpopular ideas, "despised and rejected of men." And who can dare to say that he was ineffectual? In all the universe there is nothing so potent as *ideas*! The seer and the poet influence life at its very sources. A man of imagination and vision is untrue to his highest self if he abandons his dream to handle the machinery of worldly power and ambition. To say that Crosby was a failure is to say that moral force is impotent and that idealism has lost its lure.

If capacity for great thought is what makes a man great—as it surely is—then Crosby was a very great

man. His thought daily, habitually, moved along majestic lines. "What is greater," he asked, "than to shape the soul of a people?" He has helped to shape the soul of the whole world. He did not always reach the masses, but he reached a certain spiritual stratum everywhere. He had correspondents in many lands, and his name has gone to the ends of the earth. Australia has paid its tribute. Germany has translated his poems. Bjornson in Norway, Zangwill in England, Howells in America, responded to his appeal. The message of Ernest Crosby, the radiance of his personality, have entered into the very fibre of our age. We may say of him what Henry James said of Turgenieff: "He was of the stuff of which glories are made!"

The chance to serve is our great reward; true work is joy, and joy is highest pay—in this spirit is this book made at the Ariel Press on Fellowship Farm, Westwood, Mass., as the gladsome days approach Christmas-tide, 1907.



THE WORKS OF ERNEST CROSBY

POETRY

PLAIN TALK IN PSALM AND PARABLE
SWORDS AND PLOUGHSHARES
BROAD-CAST

PROSE

TOLSTOY AND HIS MESSAGE
TOLSTOY AS A SCHOOLMASTER
GARRISON THE NON-RESISTANT
EDWARD CARPENTER, POET AND PROPHET
GOLDEN-RULE JONES, MAYOR OF TOLEDO
CAPTAIN JINKS, HERO

These books may be had, in America, from Ariel Press, Westwood, Mass., Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York, or The Public Publishing Company, Chicago; in England, from A. C. Fifield, 44 Fleet St., London.

